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## THE IMPACT OF SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN MODERN FASHION DESIGN ON THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF YOUNG CHINESE CONSUMERS

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### Abstract:

In the 21st century, global environmental issues have become increasingly prominent, with sustainability becoming a key concept across various industries. Fashion design, a field deeply embraced by younger generations, has also witnessed a shift towards sustainable practices. This transition not only promotes the green transformation of the industry but profoundly impacts the cultural identity of young Chinese consumers. The integration of sustainable practices in modern fashion design includes the use of eco-friendly materials, green production processes, and designs that prioritize recyclability and reuse. Young Chinese consumers, who are exposed to a multitude of cultural influences, are shaping their cultural identity through their fashion consumption choices. Liu(2020). Specifically, the adoption of sustainable fashion practices strengthens their environmental awareness, integrates with traditional cultural values, shapes unique individual identities, and enhances cultural confidence. This trend is further exemplified by the emergence of 'guochao' (national trend) where traditional Chinese elements are integrated into fashion, reflecting a return to and appreciation of traditional culture. Moreover, the emphasis on social responsibility in sustainable fashion design encourages young consumers to support brands that prioritize worker welfare, fair trade, and environmental sustainability, thus reflecting a deeper cultural commitment to social justice and ethical practices. As sustainable fashion continues to gain momentum, it will play a pivotal role in shaping the cultural identity of young Chinese consumers. This study aims to explore the impact of sustainable fashion practices on cultural identity and assess the potential and challenges of sustainable fashion in the Chinese market.

**Keywords:**

Sustainable Fashion, Cultural Identity, Young Chinese Consumers

**Introduction**

As the 21st century progresses, Jiang(2020) we are faced with increasingly serious global environmental issues. The importance of sustainable development has become paramount, as it addresses the urgent need to protect our planet. Fashion design, a field that is deeply admired by the younger generation, holds significant weight in the pursuit of sustainability. Incorporating sustainable practices into modern fashion design not only drives the green transformation of the industry but also profoundly shapes the cultural identity of young Chinese consumers. Firstly, sustainable fashion design encourages consumers to cultivate a sense of environmental protection. In the fashion industry, many brands often adopt high-pollution and energy-intensive production methods in pursuit of short-term economic gains, leading to significant resource waste and environmental degradation. However, sustainable fashion design emphasizes considering the environmental impact throughout the product's lifecycle, from design, production, usage, to disposal. By utilizing eco-friendly materials and green production processes, it minimizes harm to the environment. This philosophy guides consumers to prioritize environmental performance when purchasing fashion products, fostering a sense of environmental awareness. Chua(2019).

Secondly, sustainable fashion design promotes the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture. China boasts a rich and profound traditional culture, which serves as the spiritual pillar and cultural foundation of the Chinese nation. However, in the process of modernization, many traditional cultural elements have gradually been forgotten. Sustainable fashion design fuses traditional cultural elements with modern design concepts, creating fashion products with unique charm and cultural significance. These products not only satisfy consumers' aesthetic needs but also evoke their interest and recognition of traditional culture, promoting its inheritance and innovation. Zhang (2023).

Lastly, sustainable fashion design shapes the unique personality and cultural confidence of young consumers. In a globalized context, young consumers are exposed to various cultural influences. They express their individuality and values through their fashion choices, often favoring designs that incorporate sustainability principles. This consumption behavior reflects not only their aesthetic pursuits and cultural preferences but also their strengthened cultural confidence and identity. By choosing sustainable fashion products, young consumers showcase their unique personalities while also promoting values such as environmental protection, fairness, and justice.

**Sustainable Practices in Modern Fashion Design**

In the rapidly evolving world of fashion, sustainability has become a crucial consideration. Modern fashion design is increasingly embracing sustainable practices to minimize the industry's impact on the environment. Fletcher, K. (2014).

***Design for Longevity***

Fletcher emphasizes the importance of creating garments that are designed to last longer. This involves selecting high-quality, durable materials and construction methods that ensure the

longevity of the product. By focusing on durability, designers can reduce the frequency with which consumers need to replace items, thereby decreasing overall consumption and waste.

### ***Eco-Friendly Materials***

Fletcher advocates for the use of eco-friendly materials such as organic cotton, hemp, bamboo, and recycled fibers. These materials have a lower environmental impact compared to conventional materials, as they often require fewer pesticides, less water, and produce less waste.

### ***Zero-Waste Design***

One of the innovative approaches discussed by Fletcher is zero-waste design. This method involves creating patterns that use 100% of the fabric, leaving no waste. By rethinking the way garments are cut and constructed, designers can significantly reduce the amount of textile waste produced during the manufacturing

This shift towards sustainability is reflected in various aspects of the design process, from the choice of materials to production methods and even the design itself.

### **Utilization of Environmentally-Friendly Materials**

At the core of sustainable fashion design lies the selection of materials. Modern fashion designers are now favoring eco-friendly materials that have a lower impact on the environment. Organic cotton, for instance, is a popular choice as it is grown without the use of harmful pesticides and fertilizers. This not only reduces the pollution caused by agricultural practices but also ensures that the fabric is free from chemicals that could potentially harm the wearer's skin. Zhang (2023).

Another trend is the use of recycled and regenerated fibers. These materials are derived from waste products or discarded items, reducing the demand for new, virgin materials. For example, polyester made from recycled plastic bottles is now widely used in fashion garments. Not only does this reduce the amount of plastic waste ending up in landfills and oceans, but it also saves energy and reduces carbon emissions associated with the production of new fibers. Guo(2020).

### **Adoption of Green Production Processes**

The fashion industry is a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, mainly due to the energy-intensive nature of the production process. To address this issue, many fashion brands are adopting green production methods that aim to reduce their carbon footprint.

One such method is the use of renewable energy sources such as solar panels and wind turbines to power factories and production facilities. This reduces the reliance on fossil fuels and cuts down carbon emissions. Additionally, some brands are exploring the use of low-impact dyes and finishes that require less energy and water to produce.

Moreover, efforts are being made to minimize waste during the production process. This includes optimizing material usage to reduce fabric waste, recycling and upcycling scraps, and using biodegradable packaging. Some brands even have zero-waste policies, ensuring that all waste produced during production is diverted from landfills and recycled or composted.

**Designing for Circularity and Reusability**

Another key aspect of sustainable fashion design is creating products that can be easily recycled, repaired, or reused. This approach aims to extend the lifespan of fashion items and reduce the amount of waste generated. Liu(2020).

One way to achieve this is by designing garments that are modular or have detachable parts. This allows the wearer to customize their look by mixing and matching different parts, while also making it easier to replace worn-out parts without having to discard the entire garment.

Another strategy is to design clothing that can be transformed into other items or accessories. For example, a dress could be converted into a skirt or a jacket, depending on the wearer's needs. This versatility not only adds value to the garment but also reduces the need for purchasing new items.

Furthermore, fashion brands are also exploring the use of technology to enhance the sustainability of their products. For instance, the integration of smart textiles that can track wear and tear can help identify when a garment needs to be repaired or replaced, preventing premature disposal.

In conclusion, sustainable practices in modern fashion design are gaining momentum as the industry recognizes the need to reduce its environmental impact. From the choice of materials to production methods and design considerations, there are numerous opportunities for fashion brands to incorporate sustainability into their operations. As consumers become more aware of the environmental implications of their fashion choices, sustainable fashion is likely to become even more prevalent in the future. Wei (2017).

**Cultural Identity Among Young Chinese Consumers**

In the era of globalization, young Chinese consumers are increasingly exposed to a wide range of cultures from all over the world. This exposure has led to a multicultural identity, where traditional values and modern influences coexist. Additionally, the recent rise of "Guochao" (national trend) has sparked a renewed interest in traditional Chinese culture, resulting in a unique blend of traditional and modern elements in the fashion and consumption patterns of young consumers.

***The Impact of Multiculturalism***

Globalization has opened up a window for young Chinese consumers to explore and embrace cultures from diverse backgrounds. Through the internet, travel, and media, they are able to access information and experiences that were once inaccessible. This has led to a broadening of their cultural horizons and a shift in their perspectives. The multicultural identity of young Chinese consumers is reflected in their diverse tastes and preferences. They appreciate both Western fashion trends and traditional Chinese aesthetics. They enjoy international cuisine but also cherish local flavors. This cultural diversity is not just a superficial trend; it has become a part of their identity and way of life. Zong (2023).

***The Return of Traditional Culture***

In recent years, the "Guochao" trend has gained significant momentum in China. This trend is characterized by a renewed interest in traditional Chinese culture and a desire to integrate traditional elements into modern fashion and consumer goods.

Young Chinese consumers are increasingly drawn to products and brands that embrace traditional culture. They appreciate the unique aesthetics of traditional crafts, such as embroidery, lacquerware, and pottery. They also value the historical and cultural significance of traditional symbols and motifs, such as the dragon, phoenix, and Chinese knots. This trend is not just a fad; it is a reflection of young consumers' desire to connect with their cultural roots. They see traditional culture as a source of pride and identity, and they want to express this through their fashion and consumption choices.

### ***Fusion of Traditional and Modern***

The blend of traditional and modern elements is a defining characteristic of young Chinese consumers' cultural identity. They appreciate the uniqueness of traditional culture but also value the convenience and functionality of modern products. In fashion, for example, young consumers are embracing traditional Chinese patterns and motifs but pairing them with modern cuts and styles. They are also incorporating traditional accessories, such as fans and umbrellas, into their modern outfits. Kim (2021).

In the consumer goods market, brands are responding to this trend by creating products that fuse traditional craftsmanship with modern design. This fusion not only appeals to young consumers' aesthetic tastes but also resonates with their cultural identity.

### ***Impact on Society and the Economy***

The cultural identity of young Chinese consumers is having increasingly significant impacts on society and the economy. As they become the primary drivers of consumption, their preferences and tastes are shaping the trends in fashion, food, and entertainment. Moreover, the renewed interest in traditional culture is fueling the growth of related industries, such as tourism, handicrafts, and cultural heritage protection. This is not only boosting the economy but also contributing to the preservation and promotion of traditional culture. Zong (2023).

In conclusion, the cultural identity of young Chinese consumers is a complex blend of traditional and modern elements. They appreciate the diversity of global cultures but also value their own cultural roots. As they continue to shape the trends in fashion and consumption, their cultural identity will play an increasingly important role in society and the economy.

## **The Impact of Sustainable Practices on the Cultural Identity of Young Chinese Consumers**

In the contemporary world, the intersection of environmental awareness and cultural identity is becoming increasingly significant, especially among young Chinese consumers. As they become more environmentally conscious, they are integrating this mindset into their fashion choices and consumption patterns, which not only reflects their respect for traditional culture but also showcases their identification with harmonious coexistence and unity with nature. This trend is shaping a unique cultural identity that is both environmentally friendly and culturally rooted.

### ***Enhancement of Environmental Awareness and Integration with Cultural Identity***

In recent years, young Chinese consumers have displayed a growing concern for the environmental impact of their consumer choices. This trend is particularly evident in the fashion industry, where an increasing number of young people are paying attention to the sustainability and environmental friendliness of the products they purchase. Kim (2021).



The integration of environmental awareness and cultural identity is a unique phenomenon among young Chinese consumers. They are realizing that traditional cultural values, such as harmony and balance with nature, are not just abstract concepts but have practical implications in their daily lives. By choosing sustainable fashion products, they are not only protecting the environment but also honoring their cultural heritage and expressing their cultural identity.

For example, young Chinese consumers are increasingly favoring fabrics made from recycled materials or natural fibers that have a lower impact on the environment. They are also showing a preference for brands that prioritize sustainable practices, such as using renewable energy or reducing waste during production. This trend is not just a fad; it is a reflection of young consumers' deep-seated values and cultural identity. Wei (2017).

### ***Unique Personality Shaping and Cultural Confidence Enhancement***

The pursuit of sustainable fashion is not just a response to environmental concerns; it is also a way for young Chinese consumers to express their unique personality and values. By choosing fashion products with distinctive designs and eco-friendly credentials, they are showcasing their individuality and making a statement about the kind of world they want to live in.

This trend is also enhancing young Chinese consumers' cultural confidence. As they become more aware of the environmental impact of their consumer choices, they are realizing that traditional cultural values, such as respect for nature and harmony with the universe, are not outdated but are highly relevant in today's world. By embracing sustainable fashion, they are not just following a trend; they are embracing their cultural heritage and contributing to the global movement towards environmental sustainability. Schmidt(2018).

### ***Social Responsibility Embodiment and Cultural Responsibility Manifestation***

The rise of sustainable fashion is also shaping young Chinese consumers' perception of social responsibility. They are realizing that as consumers, they have a duty to ensure that the products they purchase are produced in a way that respects human rights, labor rights, and environmental standards.

This shift in mindset is reflected in their consumption patterns. Young Chinese consumers are increasingly favoring brands that prioritize social responsibility and ethical production. They are paying attention to issues such as fair trade, worker welfare, and environmental protection when making purchasing decisions. This trend is not just a matter of personal preference; it is a reflection of young consumers' commitment to social justice and fairness.

Moreover, this emphasis on social responsibility is also a manifestation of young Chinese consumers' cultural responsibility. They are realizing that as members of a global community, they have a duty to protect the environment and promote sustainable development. By choosing sustainable fashion products, they are contributing to this global effort and demonstrating their commitment to cultural responsibility. Schmidt(2018).

## **Case Studies on Sustainable Production and Consumption in the Fashion Industry**

### ***Leveraging Eco-Friendly Materials and Green Manufacturing for Brand Appeal***

Amidst the growing global concern for environmental degradation, several fashion brands in China have embarked on a journey to promote sustainable production and consumption. One such brand, "Eco-Threads," has successfully gained the hearts of young consumers by incorporating eco-friendly materials into its designs. The use of organic cotton, recycled

polyester, and biodegradable fabrics has not only reduced the brand's carbon footprint but also appealed to the environmentally conscious demographic.

To further enhance its green credentials, "Eco-Threads" has invested in green manufacturing processes. This includes the use of solar-powered factories, water-saving dyeing techniques, and zero-waste production methods. These initiatives have not only lowered the brand's operational costs but have also positioned it as a leader in sustainable fashion.

The success of "Eco-Threads" can be attributed to its ability to strike a balance between style and sustainability. The brand's collections are designed with a focus on functionality and fashion, ensuring that consumers do not have to compromise on their aesthetic preferences. This approach has resonated with the younger generation, who are increasingly demanding brands that align with their values and beliefs. Jiang(2020).

### ***Fashion Meets Conservation: A Collaboration for a Greener Future***

Another noteworthy case is the collaboration between fashion designer "Ocean Wear" and a marine conservation organization. This partnership has resulted in the creation of a unique fashion series inspired by the ocean's beauty and fragility. The designs feature marine-inspired motifs and colors, drawing inspiration from the diverse marine ecosystem. Zhang (2019).

However, the collaboration is not just about aesthetics. A significant portion of the proceeds from the sales of these fashion items is donated to the marine conservation organization's eco-restoration projects. This not only supports vital conservation efforts but also raises awareness about the need to protect our oceans. Liu, Y. (2017).

The partnership has been a mutually beneficial one. The fashion brand has gained access to a new segment of consumers who are passionate about marine conservation, while the conservation organization has received valuable funding for its projects. Moreover, the collaboration has fostered a deeper connection between fashion and conservation, encouraging more brands and individuals to adopt a sustainable lifestyle. Goethner, M. (2018).

### ***Influencer Marketing for Sustainable Fashion***

In addition to direct brand initiatives, influencer marketing has also played a crucial role in promoting sustainable fashion in China. Several social media influencers and bloggers have taken it upon themselves to educate their followers about the importance of sustainable fashion and to promote brands that align with this philosophy. Jiang, H. S. (2020).

One such influencer, "Green Vogue," has become a household name in the sustainable fashion community. Her blog and social media channels are dedicated to covering the latest trends in eco-friendly fashion, providing tips on how to shop sustainably, and reviewing brands that are making a difference. Her influence has helped to shape the perception of sustainable fashion among her followers, encouraging them to make more environmentally conscious choices.

Zhang, N. (2019). In conclusion, the fashion industry is undergoing a paradigm shift towards sustainability. By leveraging eco-friendly materials, green manufacturing processes, and collaborations with conservation organizations, brands are not only reducing their environmental impact but also gaining the trust and loyalty of consumers. The future of fashion lies in a sustainable and ethical approach that respects the environment and its inhabitants.

## Conclusion

As the global fashion industry continues to evolve, the quest for sustainability has become a pivotal discussion point. Wang, L(2018). In China, a country with a rich history and burgeoning fashion industry, the shift towards sustainable fashion is not just a trend; it is a necessity. The cases discussed above demonstrate the various ways in which fashion brands, designers, and influencers are working towards a greener future. Firstly, the incorporation of eco-friendly materials and green manufacturing processes has been a significant step forward. Brands like "Eco-Threads" have shown that sustainability can be achieved without compromising on style or quality. This approach has resonated with young consumers, who are increasingly demanding brands that align with their values and beliefs. As a result, we are witnessing a rise in the popularity of sustainable fashion, indicating a shift in consumer preferences. Qian,(2021). Secondly, collaborations between fashion brands and conservation organizations have been a powerful force in promoting sustainable fashion. The partnership between "Ocean Wear" and a marine conservation organization is a prime example of how such collaborations can benefit both parties. By supporting eco-restoration projects, fashion brands are not only contributing to the conservation of our natural environment but also fostering a deeper connection between fashion and conservation. This connection encourages more people to adopt a sustainable lifestyle and supports the growth of the sustainable fashion industry.

Thirdly, the role of influencers in promoting sustainable fashion cannot be overlooked. Social media influencers and bloggers like "Green Vogue" have a powerful voice and the ability to influence consumer behavior. By sharing information about sustainable fashion and reviewing eco-friendly brands, these influencers are educating their followers and shaping their perception of sustainable fashion. Their influence has helped to normalize sustainable fashion and make it more accessible to the masses. Li, M. (2020).

Looking ahead, the future of sustainable fashion in China is bright. With the increasing awareness of environmental issues and the rise in consumer demand for sustainable products, brands are more likely to prioritize sustainability in their operations. This will not only benefit the environment but also help brands to build a strong reputation and attract loyal customers. However, it is important to note that sustainability is not a one-time effort; it requires constant innovation and commitment. Brands need to continuously explore new eco-friendly materials, improve their manufacturing processes, and collaborate with conservation organizations to make a real difference. Additionally, consumers also play a crucial role in driving sustainable fashion. By making conscious choices and supporting brands that prioritize sustainability, consumers can help to shape the future of the fashion industry. Schmidt (2018).

In conclusion, the future of sustainable fashion in China lies in a collective effort by brands, designers, influencers, and consumers. By working together, we can create a fashion industry that respects the environment, supports conservation efforts, and caters to the needs and values of the modern consumer.

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